

THE REMINISCENCES OF CARL SCHURZ

ing of special punishment. But even those regions which had but little, or not at all, been touched by military operations, were laboring under dire distress. The "Confederate money" in the hands of the Southern people, paper money Issued by the Confederate government without any security behind it, had, by the collapse of the Confederacy, become entirely worthless. Only a few individuals of more or less wealth had been fortunate enough to save, and to keep, throughout the war, small hoards of gold and silver, which, in the aggregate, amounted to little. The people may, therefore, be said to have been substantially without a "circulating medium" to serve in the transaction of ordinary business immediately after the close of the war. United States money came in to fill the vacuum, but it could not be had for nothing. It could be obtained only by selling something for it in the shape of goods or of labor. The Southern people, having during four years of war, devoted their productive activity, aside from the satisfaction of their current home wants, almost entirely to the sustenance of their army and of the machinery of their government, and having suffered great losses by the destruction of property, had of course very little to sell. In fact, they were dreadfully impoverished and needed all their laboring capacity to provide for the wants of the next day. And as agriculture was their main resource upon which everything else depended,

the next crop was to them of supreme importance.

But now the men come home from the war found their whole agricultural labor system turned upside down. Slave labor had been their absolute reliance. They had been accustomed to it; they had believed in it; they had religiously regarded it as a necessity in the order of the universe.

During the war a large majority of the negroes had stayed upon the plantations and attended to the crops in the

[168],